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by Christopher Paris | Mar 19, 2014 | Opinion |

Watch Out for the Self-Declared "Pros"

I recently watched the online flameout of one of Quality Digest's newest contributing writers, a self-immolation fueled by the gasoline of one guy's narcissism, and the lit match of a publication desperate for free content. *Ka-boom.*

I won't name the guy because I'm in a good mood, but it's irrelevant anyway. This stuff happens all the time, and our industry is awash with what I've coined the "sudden experts" who appear out of nowhere and suddenly claim mastery over things they curiously had no previous experience with. (Watch the exponential growth of "risk experts" about to happen because of ISO 9001:2015.)



In this case, "Dick" (not his real name) has a checkered employment history which anyone can see just by reading his LinkedIn profile, which means this is the stuff he *admits* to. (One wonders what is missing.) The only semi-consistent theme is a string of stints as a CB auditor, and lots of years as a self-employed consultant. The consulting part can't be verified, because unlike most functioning consultants, he has no significant web presence marketing his work, except for an ancient one-page website apparently created for free using Yahoo (snicker). No listing of clients, no detailed discussion of his approach, not even a way to get an online quote. Nothing but a bold claim that "ISO 9000 *[sic]* is easy" and that his services are somehow "guaranteed."

Reading between the lines of his resume, you can see that the consulting gigs start and stop, as do the CB auditing gigs, raising questions as to why. Shouldn't one have consistent employment in either of these? Then there's his most recent entry: a machine shop. Now far be it for me to denigrate machinists, but when you have a decade of CB auditing and alleged "guaranteed" consulting, to suddenly land in a machine shop is a bit odd. It smacks of "failed consultant" if anything.

But carnival barkers keep barking even when the crowd is thin; if anything they bark louder. And so it is with Dick, who has managed to create a false aura of "expertise" around a resume of spotty experience and failed consulting. First, he self-published a book on "The Process Approach" through one of those online vanity presses. You upload the document, and get paid per sale, with the online publishing house taking a cut. There's no physical printing involved, no risk for the publisher, so you could write a book on "Abbott and Costello Meet the Rapist, Santa Claus" and they'd print it. The book wasn't even edited. But it was, technically, a "published credit."

With a book under his belt, Dick then began ensuring everyone knew about it. He offered free copies to people, including me, which is odd since he knows I would rather eat my own feet than read one of his books. Then a desperate organization with an equally poor, if not worse, track record of experience began spamming the ISO 9001 community, begging for contributors to his newsletter; this would be the CERM Academy's risk management rapsheet, CERM Insight. A clever model: an overnight risk management consulting firm pops up and appeals to weak-minded dolts who need their egos fed, offering them a chance to "get published" while paying them exactly nothing, and in return using the submissions as a way to establish their own foothold in the industry, and sell risk management certifications. Of course, the authors get nothing. Dupes.

But if you need a set of quick published credits, and have no problem with someone else profiting from your writing, these type of avenues are rich with them. So Dick contributed a series of articles on the "process approach" and declared himself the only guy in the industry who truly understands it.

Just in case people weren't paying attention, he then updated his LinkedIn profile with the position of "Process Approach Pro." Because nothing makes you a "professional" faster than typing the three letters "P - R - O" on a website. Screw education and actual experience.

When he approached Quality Digest. They accepted his articles on the process approach, and even gave him a TV interview on their Quality Digest Live webcast.

So "Dick" has arrived. QD never bothered to check his actual experience, his education, or even whether his approach was consistent with the general understanding of process approach theory. (It's not, because Dick believes that the process can only be managed through documentation, which he insists is the "P" in the PDCA model. ISO 9001, meanwhile, is moving away from documentation as the only means of transmitting information.)

Making matter worse, no one has vetted Dick's online behavior. A known rageaholic, Dick regularly rails against ANAB, and (through phone calls with me) believes that ANAB's Randy Dougherty has a personal vendetta against him, and is the reason for his various career setbacks. Before he was published, Dick would rant about how the industry doesn't respect him, and how it was because only he knew the truth of things, and this is why no one would publish his work. It was tinfoil hat stuff.

Release the Krakpot

How things change. In a recent confrontation over his wacko process approach theory, he went ballistic on his critics, saying, "Have you ever in your life published an article (by someone else) that accurately depicts a process approach in contrast to the more common standard-based approach?"

So, thanks for that, Quality Digest.

So here we have the end result. In a bid to keep costs down, publications like Quality Digest take free contributions from self-proclaimed experts, allow them their time in the sun, and then gather up advertising revenue, sharing exactly **none** of that with the authors. That's bad enough, but they leave behind a trail of ego-inflated morons who become a cancer on our profession, because now **"they've been published!"**

Dick's later rants got him booted off of most of the ISO 9001 related LinkedIn discussion because they started to veer into violence, and as of last night it looked like his entire account had been deleted. This wouldn't be anything new, in my personal conversations with Dick, it was clear he was extremely angry, and two colleagues told me they had seen the same behavior in real life, especially when his view was challenged. One called him a "walking Columbine."

This non-vetting of quality professionals who are willing to work for free is toxic for the industry. Right now we see Boeing's Alan Daniels, ANAB's John Knappenberger and a host of other more serious professionals sucking up to the G31000 charlatans Alex Dali and Allen Gluck, by giving them a free slot on the ISO 9000 Conference in Texas. This means that they will have a foothold into future events, and be taken seriously, even though the G31000 group's marketing contains so much false information they may well be in violation of FTC rules. Nobody vetted them!

So "Dick" may yet wind up sitting on the podium next to all the people he once insisted were out to get him, such as Lorrie Hunt and Randy Dougherty.

A Professional Typist

Finally, one last point: one cannot claim to be a "professional" at anything unless one actually makes money doing it. The difference between being a professional and, say, an amateur hobbyist, is the pay part. If you are a career auditor being paid by a certification body, that makes you a "professional auditor" — not a "process approach pro." If you work in a machine shop, that makes you a professional machinist. Simply typing "Process Approach Pro" means that you can type, nothing else. By that measure, I should type "astronaut" on my LinkedIn heading, and see if NASA hires me.

Full disclosure: in the past I have invited Quality Digest to offer coverage of the news events surrounding Oxbridge, even telling them that they do not need to mention my company name or even me. I was not submitting the articles myself, but simply offered them to run their own



investigative pieces. Most recently this included covering the complaint issued against BSI, which is fairly big news. They were invited to cover the "PEAR" ruling by JAF - a significant ruling that affected the entirety of AS9100 presentations. But did not. In fact, they simply do not respond. BSI is a major contributor to QD, although prior to that, QD had no problem covering such stories. So who knows. I guess so long as the pieces are light fluff, don't diss the advertisers and offered for free, that's the editorial criteria.

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